Family (Regardless of Blood or Time)
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Darkside_Dreamer's_Completed_Favorites, Boys_get_shook, Dadzawa Soup for The Soul (TiaLee), Tia is crying again, finished works I'm in love with, MY HERO ACADEMIA (but like... also villains), Flashfreeze Recs, Kaylee's favorite fics, 💙Dadzawa and other💙, mha fics that are my will to live

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by Blueseabird2

Summary

Shouta gets sent back in time and immediately starts putting things into place to take down All for One. More importantly, he also adopts a lot of children, meets friends at the Park, and joins Midoriya Inko on her crusade against society's idiocy. He gets Nezu involved.

(He's also not as alone as he thinks).

Notes

It's been a while since I've added something to this fandom, but this work has been (in very early stages) sitting on my computer since writing Plan C. I just finally woke with an ahah! That's where it's going. So here you and I hope you enjoy.

Home Again

Shouta woke up from his nap with a jolt sharper than a requiem. In the moments after his eyes caught on the ceiling panels above him, he was immediately aware of several things.

First, he was in the staff room at UA and had been sleeping on the expulsion paperwork for his entire class. Second, a room full of professional heroes trained to teach was not somewhere he could hide the fact that every single muscle in his body had tensed to the breaking point, even if he had yet to make a single sound.

Third and most important, the room also included Hizashi and Nemuri, who would not let professional courtesy stop them from asking if Shouta was alright (because they were his friends and not professional colleagues, damn it Shouta).

Forth, or perhaps three-dash-A, Hizashi in particular could not, under any circumstances, be allowed to talk to Shouta right now.

Shouta stood, paperwork falling off the desk haphazardly. Sound went distinctly funny the moment the pages hit the floor and the noise of Nemuri talking with Snipe as the man was drinking coffee stretched and warped. With the ease of long (too long) practice, Shouta ignored the muted volume of the world and eyed the distance to the door, the path around the yellow and black blur that was Hizashi whom Shouta wasn't looking at, and Cementoss who'd just entered the room with Powerloader at his back.

Shouta's chances weren't good, and if he waited much longer than Hizashi would be close enough that Shouta would have to look, might even meet his oldest friend's gaze, and that would break him.

Again.

Shouta threw himself out the window. He stumbled a bit as muscle memory didn't respond quite as he'd expected and his capture weapon had an almost unfamiliar kink in it, but his momentum was more than enough to get him seated in the windowsill on the level above the staff room.

He didn't settle long. A yellow line of what could only be Hizashi's hair poked out below. It probably wasn't a good thing that Shouta couldn't hear his friend's scream, despite being able to feel it's

vibrations through the glass.

He was smoother this time as he used the window ledges and a convenient flag pole to lurch up another three stories. Sound rushed back with Shouta's knock on the glass, the sudden physical awareness of Hizashi's yelling and the day to day noises of a hero school slamming into him hard enough that his next knock had a more staccato beat.

Nezu opened the window casually, only lifting a brow when Shouta lurched inside, managing not to fall by dint of habits long ingrained in a man who preferred rooftops to sidewalks.

Shouta ignored his boss and staggered into the corner of the room to sit on a small purple couch that sat across from a black armchair beside a chess board. Somehow, this corner was almost always overlooked by visitors to Nezu's office and Shouta hoped it would give him an extra moment of peace in case he'd been outside longer than he'd thought and Hizashi and Nemuri burst through the door.

Except they wouldn't. Shouta ran away from people, not towards people, and Nezu counted as people. Worse, Nezu counted as authority. No one, especially his friends, would expect Shouta to come here.

"I'm going to have a breakdown on your couch."

Nezu lowered his teacup, dark eyes dissecting Shouta's movements as the creature leaned back in his office chair.

Shouta ran one hand through his hair, then lowered it to stare at the tremble that was working its way through his fingers. "It's going to be bad, and I need you to not let Hizashi or Nemuri or anyone else find me while I do."

"You seem rather sure I'll do such a thing, Aizawa-san."

Shouta opened his mouth, ready to comment on the fact that Shouta had always made Nezu curious, even this far back, what with his hatred of the spotlight and ruthless tendencies. With the addition Shouta's really very odd behaviour, Nezu was hardly going to pass up a chance to puzzle Shouta out.

Shouta didn't say any of that. "You're safe," he said instead.

And Nezu was. He was territorial. He protected what was his with the

animalistic ferocity he'd long convinced the world he didn't have and the intelligence he'd long convinced the heroes was his most dangerous trait. UA was his. The students were his. The teachers were also his.

Shouta was his.

Shouta heard the glass in his own tone, heard the shards cut up his words and present them to Nezu as an offering. "You're safe and I'm going to need help and you'll figure it out anyways." Shouta's breath shook out of his body. "This way I won't have to say it."

"Say what, Aizawa-san?" Nezu asked, because he cared but he also always pushed.

"Deku's dead." Again, the words weren't the ones that Shouta had planned on saying. He wasn't sure he'd ever planned on saying those particular words, to be honest (even as they burrowed into his lungs and scarred there, just like the image of One for All destroying Izuku's body as he gave it up for this one, impossible chance).

Nezu cocked his head. "I don't know who that is."

"Someone you would have liked." The answer poured out of Shouta, tearing out of his throat and bringing great wracking sobs as punctuation. He wrapped thin arms around his middle, bending in half and touching his forehead to his knees.

He distantly registered Nezu on the phone, cheerfully announcing to the person on the other end, probably Hizashi, that Shouta had been working on a case for Nezu and had a breakthrough that meant he would be absent for the next few days.

Shouta didn't bother to try and keep quiet. He knew (in the part of his brain that was still coherent, that never stopped because stopping was dangerous and dangerous meant death) that the acoustics in this corner were designed not to carry. He also knew that he wouldn't succeed, even if he did try. Nezu wouldn't judge, regardless; the not-rat knew what the aftermath of torture looked like (what it felt like).

It took a long time for Shouta to be able to concentrate on something other than the rattling in his bones. Enough time, apparently, for Nezu to have made three separate cups of tea and placed them on the table by the chess board. Two were cold while one was just faintly steaming, the scent of jasmine attempting to wrap around Shouta and brace him long enough to breathe.

Nezu looked up from his tablet when Shouta reached for the steaming cup, humming approvingly and looking deliberately at a quilted blanket lying folded over the chess board.

Shouta smiled, or he would have, if he could get the muscles in his jaw to work properly. Instead he blinked, reaching out with a slow hand to grab the blanket and drape it's floral diamonds over his lap, idly distracting himself with the thought of punching everyone who'd ever said Nezu didn't have feelings in the face.

Nezu might sometimes have trouble acting on an emotional basis or on acting on other people's emotions, but Shouta currently thought the blanket and tea were pretty fucking great. He hadn't even noticed he'd been cold, but the warmth seeping into his skin was bracing.

He actually felt like he might be able to stop shaking at some point in the future, if he was very lucky and no one touched him.

"I don't remember earning this kind of trust."

Shouta heard 'trust' and translated it to 'loyalty,' knowing loyalty was what he'd shown. Sure, he'd trusted Nezu enough to breakdown in his office, but they both knew Shouta was capable of disappearing into the depths of the city or even the school to have his breakdown in peace.

Shouta had found a problem, a significant one, and come to Nezu for help in solving it (Shouta was territorial, too, and possessive besides).

"You have," Shouta told his tea.

Nezu hummed again, pressing small paws together. "How much time do we have before the first trigger point for the future you aim to prevent?"

And Shouta would die for this creature, he would, though he'd really rather avoid that outcome all told (Deku would be mad at him if he didn't). But Nezu believed Shouta, without Shouta having to have said a word, and, more importantly, he hadn't asked how long. Shouta wasn't sure he could bear having to say that he didn't know, that they'd stoped counting, towards the end.

Shouta thought back, sluggishly moving past the decay and the rot and the green, green, green to the days of being a regular teacher. He'd only ever expelled the entirety of his class once, the second year of his career at UA.

“Seven years.” Seven years till he saw his hell class. His kids.

Officially. Like hell he was going to wait that long. Todoroki and Shinso in particular needed a check up.

And Deku. (It had just been Shouta and Izuku, in the end.)

“I assume you have goals.”

“Several.”

“Excellent.” Nezu clapped his paws together and reached for a notebook (Shouta’s heart hurt). “If you tell me the ones I can help you with, we can prioritize our immediate efforts. I’ll put it out to the staff that you’re using your newly clear schedule to help me out with a few personal projects.”

“I guess some things won’t change.” Shouta snorted, watching ripples form in the tea. “You used this year last time round to discover a like for having an underground hero on call. I liked having information that was scarily accurate.”

“Always happy to please.” Nezu paused. “You’ll have to disappear, lose contact for at least a month.”

“I mean, that would be helpful.” Finding Shigaraki would be a trick and a half, but Shouta had promised. Izuku had been pretty sure the future villain had spent several years on the street before All for One had found him (Izuku had been so sure the child could be saved without the monster whispering in his ear; Shouta wasn’t as confident, but Izuku’s smile could get him to do much worse than try to save a boy his teacher instincts already wanted to help).

“For the trauma, Aizawa-san. You won’t be able to explain many of your reactions, particularly if what I’ve seen today is any indication. An extended stay in captivity would explain much of your behaviour. That is, if you don’t plan on telling them.”

“I don’t.”

Couldn’t. Couldn’t ever.

How he tell someone society had ended? That his world had basically stopped even as he breathed and fought and lost? How did he tell his friends that everything they did was futile? That it hadn’t mattered, in the end? That they’d still died in his arms?

Shouta had survived because his kids had survived and would never stop fighting as long as any of his kids were alive. Even if each of his kids deaths had been worse than a missing limb, Deku had made it to the end, so Shouta had as well.

Shouta extended both his legs for a moment, wondering how long it would take to get used to the lack of a prosthetic.

He tilted his head. “Fuck.”

Nezu hummed.

“We’re going to need to talk to All Might.”

Shouta didn’t go missing for a month. Partly because dismantling All For One’s mother-fucking empire took nine months, partly because he refused to do that to his friends.

He still hadn’t seen them in nine months, but they had conversations. Short ones. Communications.

Hizashi was worried sick, which, really, was a reasonable response. Nemuri was furious. Shouta wasn’t unaware that her recommendation for joining UA was supposed to help ground him and keep out of some of the more dangerous areas he’d been lurking in before his teaching job. It had even worked, the first time around.

Only the fact that Nezu had briefed the UA staff on Shouta’s current placement with All Might gave Shouta some wiggle room and prevented his friends storming the country looking for him, as they’d threatened to do at least three times (he loved his friends so much). And that was more based on what *Shouta* working with *All Might* meant about the severity of the situation than the hype of All Might being the Number One Hero.

Shouta’s friends had better taste than that.

The empire wasn’t destroyed in those nine months, not completely. They were close. They’d reduced All for One to a handful of locations and avoided the battle that had crippled All Might entirely. Shouta felt he could leave the remainder of the battle to All Might and Sir Nighteye, particularly since all that remained were the large-scale

takedowns that were much more Daylight heroics then the skulking, information mongering, and sabotage that Shouta had been doing so far.

That wasn't to say Shouta wasn't demanding constant updates, something that All Might himself was surprisingly willing to accommodate. The man was perhaps viewing the updates as a condition to Shouta's agreement to go home. All Might had prepared an entire bumbling speech about how they can handle the rest, Eraserhead had already done so much, they had an inside man, please go rest Shouta.

Shouta possibly had a hard time resisting such genuine care from the former scarecrow who'd maybe sort of been his friend once upon a time. The man also wasn't wrong, for all that Shouta couldn't tell Yagi that Shouta had burnt out years and futures ago.

So he was home.

He would go back to school tomorrow. He would go back to UA and walk into the staff room and see his friends. He was not ready. He wanted it more than almost anything and he was not ready.

He didn't flinch when the woman sat next to him and jolting him out of his thoughts, though he did close his eyes briefly. He knew this was coming. Really, a grown man cannot sit at park within sight of the play equipment all by himself and not expect someone to comment. Not with how frequently he'd been here in the last week as he wrapped things up and tried to get ready for school.

Shouta started to turn, hand already going to his Hero Licence and mouth opening to promise he wasn't some creep. Hi brain skipped however, at the feel of a cool hand over his and grass green, *life* green eyes meeting his.

"That's hardly necessary, Eraserhead. I know exactly who you are." Midoriya Inko gave his hand, the one holding his licence a gentle pat and withdrew, smiling softly. "You've long been my one of my son's favourite heroes. *Both* my sons' favourite."

She looked to where a small green-haired boy was laughing while being pushed on the swings. Midoriya Izuku looked like he was having the time of his life, babbling away at the older boy doing the pushing. Shimura Tenko, Midoriya Tenko the moment the paperwork went through, was snarking at his new brother but using his glove-covered hands with infinite carefulness to keep the swinging motion going.

Shouta wondered how long it had taken for Izuku to talk Tenko into touching him with the gloves. Probably not long at all.

“Tenko recognized you the first time you sat down, which involved a lot of staring, which tipped Izuku off. The only reason you didn’t get mobbed by curious and grateful children is Tenko is convinced you’re here on a mission and refuses to let himself or his baby brother get in your way.”

“Ah,” was all Shouta found himself able to say for a long moment. “You disagree?”

Inko hummed, watching the children with Shouta instead of looking at the man beside her. “I think you’re mourning.”

Breath froze in Shouta’s lungs and he felt his muscles lock up in a faulty flight or fight response.

“I’ve lost all of my family except for my boys in one way or another,” Inko continued softly. “The library I work at is barely a street away from the hospital. I know what grief looks like, Eraserhead.”

She leaned forward, slightly, still not looking at him. “You saved my son. You saved Tenko from the streets and from the people who would never see him as more than a Villain. You saved him from *himself*. He remembers you and your words and your challenge to be better than the Heroes who ignored him. To be the Hero for the next kid like him.”

Shouta wanted to close his eyes, wanted to run away, but he couldn’t bring himself to move. He hadn’t done much of anything. Sure, he’d found Tenko, dirty and angry and tucked into the shadows of an alleyway that was perfect for the murder scene of a big action movie. Sure, he’d talked to the kid as he’d fed him a couple meals, earning at least a little trust before dumping him into the system. Sure, he’d made sure the people in the system Tenko had met had been Tsukauchi, a therapist and quirk counsellor vetted by future knowledge and Nezu both, and Midoriya Inko herself.

But that was it. Shouta had fled afterwards. Had refused to interact with the face that was so different yet so similar to the one who been responsible for the deaths of many of Shouta’s students (his kids, his family).

He’d watched, though. He’d sat on any one of the many park benches and watched as baby-Izuku (baby Deku) had cajoled and hugged and

babbled the confusion and hostility out of his new big brother. His new big brother with the super cool quirk who *understood* what it meant to be ostracized by society, to be victim to casual cruelty.

Shouta had watched and forgiven. How could he not when he saw Tenko's spine go from the hunched rust that shrouded rage and fear and hurt to the delicate steel that formed the backbone a near-feral desire to *protect this one good thing?* How could he not when that one good thing was Izuku (not Shouta's Izuku, but *Izuku*)?

How could Shouta not when that was the same expression that he'd seen in the fucking mirror the last time he'd been able to bring himself to look?

"You brought me my son, a piece I didn't even know was missing from my family. I-" She faltered for the first time since she'd sat down. "I was considering- I wasn't sure I was going to take in any more fosters. Not after how the last one treated Izuku. Not after how easily their justified hurt and anger found an outlet in my son and how sad he was when not even his foster siblings wanted to be his friend."

She shook her head. "I know grief, Eraserhead. I know grief-stricken exhaustion. You saved my son, *both of them*, by giving them each other. I'm more than happy to listen, if you want."

Shouta didn't turn to face her. He didn't imagine he would be able to hold up against any version of the Midoriya eyes.

"Will you tell me about your child?"

"It-its not that simple. He isn't, wasn't mine. I-" The words caught in his throat which Shouta figured was fine since he hadn't meant to say anything anyways. He tipped forward and let his hair cover his face.

Inko hummed again, softly, like the opening bars to a symphony. "I imagine it is often very complicated with heroics and the quirks and motivations you must be exposed to."

They sat in silence for a long moment, watching baby Izuku take a leap of the swings and tumble to the ground laughing. Tenko ran to pick him up, immediately falling pray to baby Izuku's octopus arms.

Shouta thought about telling Inko about his Izuku, about his *son* because it was complicated but Izuku hadn't called Shouta anything beside Dadzawa in the end. Thought about telling her his son was quirkless because, for all the power of One for All, Izuku had always

felt quirkless. Thought about telling her his son was a Hero, because Izuku had *always* been a Hero.

He thought about all the things he would never tell her: the nights holding each other after finding another classmate gone, the injuries patched up with an ever dwindling first aid kit, the look on Izuku's face when he figured out he could give up One for All for one shot at something as ridiculous as time travel.

"He liked green," Shouta said, voice layered with blood and ghosts and eulogies. "He liked green and yellow and had a sweet tooth much larger than he ever let on. He was smart and brave and so so kind.

"I miss him."

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He missed his dad. His Dadzawa. He was never supposed to do this alone, he wasn't.

He couldn't.

Except he would. He had to. A chance for his dad and his friends and his mom and all the hundred of thousands civilians to live without ever knowing the horrors of All for One? He'd do it.

He'd returned to the past in the same location as the one where he'd left the future, deep in one of All for One's lairs. There'd been fire and explosion and several dead. He taken advantage of the chaos: started yelling at the peons after stealing a white coat and ID from someone who wouldn't be getting up again. He didn't feel badly about it, not really.

He recognized the name, had done extensive research on the man as part of the failed efforts to bring down All for One in the future. Not only could he fake the deceased's intelligence quirk with relative ease but the world was much better off without that particular brand of cruelty.

Izuku had cleaned up the mess, let himself be shuffled to medical, and allowed his extensive injuries to be played off as being due to the incident. He'd have to hack into some of the records later to sift some things around, but he could do that. He could.

He could pretend to be a monster. He certainly no longer felt like a hero.

He stool in the room of the man's who identity he'd stolen. He stood and shook. Shook from the explosion, shook from the time travel, shook from the loss of One for All, shook from the pain, shook form the sheer utter loneliness of loosing the only person he had left.

(Shook from the image of his Dadzawa turning to face hundreds of low-level villains in a mockery of that first day at the USJ, blood in his teeth and ghosts in his bones as he bought Izuku the time to reach the equipment and sacrifice his borrowed quirk for this one last shattered chance.)

Izuku shook as he closed his eyes for a nap, barbed dreams already wrapping around his bones as awareness faded away.

Park Visits

Chapter Summary

> Shouta goes to the park. He then goes to other parks so his kids can make friends because they deserve that. Baby-Izuku thinks Shouta deserves something as well.

Chapter Notes

> I hope you enjoy some family feels!

Shouta returned to the park.

He returned to the park the next day, jittery with the phantom hugs of friends who knew more had happened than he was admitting and were struggling to let that be. He returned the day after and the one after that as well.

He didn't sit on the edges anymore.

Izuku and Tenko had taken their mother's approach as open season and the next time Shouta didn't even get five minutes of alone time before being besieged by a smiling green babble monster. It was adorable and also very frightening. The kid was *smart,* even so young, and the analysis that baby Izuku casually spouted was actually quite accurate. Shouta had blinked and then told baby Izuku exactly that because Shouta was pretty sure the kid didn't get enough positive encouragement.

This thought was confirmed by Izuku's blushing face and sudden stammering departure to go investigate something by the picnic tables.

Tenko huffed but tugged lightly with gloved fingers on Shouta's sleeve. "Thanks," Tenko muttered before chasing after his brother.

Shouta followed a couple minutes later because really, if they were going to be jumping off picnic tables as part of their game, then they should be using much better form.

Inko laughed at him the entire way, which was nothing compared to her laughter a week later when one Bakugou Katsuki was added to the group.

It actually wasn't that hard. Bakugou and Tenko had been having a screaming match (apparently a regular habit) by the bushes just out of easy earshot of their parents, Izuku fretting beside them. Shouta had shown Bakugou his hero license, blown Bakugou's mind when he said Shouta worked with many Heroes that fought quirkless, and then challenged all three kids to a modified game of capture the flag where baby Izuku and his clever little mind kicked their assess.

It wasn't enough, not really, but it was a foot in the door that Izuku and Tenko were happy to use to storm the castle of Bakugou's prejudice. Shouta made a second contribution a week later by showing his UA teacher's ID and having a very honest conversation about what he looked for in students and how many kid's he'd expelled for any kind of bullying. And then defining bullying.

Bakugou was still an arrogant brat, but Shouta rather thought he wouldn't be a bully, this time around. Not with Tenko's sharp eyes and twitching fingers hovering over Izuku's shoulders as a constant challenge that someone could protect Izuku better and more respectfully than Bakugou. The complete and utter restructuring of their school and the appearance of new teachers that had been vetted by Nezu wouldn't hurt, either.

The next big change happened on a weekend about a month after Inko had sat next to him and refused to be moved from his life. His day was supposed to be simple: lunch with Hizashi and Nemuri followed by a pre-arranged park visit. Both Inko and Bakugou Mitsuki kept insisting on texting him to make said arrangements.

Bakugou Mitsuki had taken to befriending him with a fierceness that made sense for her personality but baffled Shouta in terms of the stranger with no kids hanging around a park. He supposed Inko probably intimated something about the 'lost his child thing,' or maybe the 'got your child to smarten up thing', or even the 'my family has forcibly adopted this sad man no explanations given thing.'

Shouta also hadn't given any explantations to Hizashi and Nemuri. They normally did lunch at least once a week but had missed out so far due to a couple of heavy cases (one more All for One base was dust and ash) on top of exam season. Shouta wasn't going to miss the meal, not with their touches still so grounding, not when he remembered a time when there had been no more meals at all.

He'd been checking his phone a lot, though. The two women had told their kids he was coming and Shouta wasn't about to disappoint them

by being late. Nemuri's cool hand and apple-painted nails rested on his when he'd checked it for the third time in ten minutes after they'd finished eating.

"You can go, Shou."

Shouta looked up to see her smile, the soft one she only used on him, Zashi, and kids she met while heroing.

"You don't need to tell us, hon. Not yet. Wherever you've been going after school and on weekends has clearly been helping. You're settling like you haven't since before your mission with All Might."

Shouta winced because he really hadn't told them a lot about that mission, which they respected because they were professionals but hated because he kept waking up in their apartments with silent screams in his throat. Hizashi made a sound at the wince and laid his hand on theirs.

"Hey, none of that now. We get it, we do. Whatever you need, Shou. Time, secrecy, whatever you need. Just, just introduce us sometime, yeah?"

Shouta thought of Inko's kind smile and Tenko's challenging smirk. He thought of baby Bakugou and his blustering that stuttered when he was around actual heroes. He thought of baby Izuku and his complete awe and the faces he'd make at meeting Present Mic and Midnight.

"Yeah. Yeah, Zashi. I will."

He went to stand up but stopped to give Hizashi an hug because the man still looked a little a sad and Shouta didn't like it when Hizashi was sad. The angle ended up a little awkward since Shouta was standing and Nemuri latched on immediately, but there were strong arms around Shouta and he could smell the spice and tea scents that had long been his home (there had been a time when his home was *gone)*.

His might have even had a lingering smile when he made it to the park, though that fell when saw an agitated Inko talking on her phone. He placed a hand on her back and squashed the feeling that tried to rise up when she leaned into the motion. She ended her call and turned to him.

"I'm so sorry, but Mitsuki's assistant made a mistake and they're trying to fix it before a deadline so I said I'd take Katsuki, but that was

the library on the phone. There's a flood, it's minor, but water and books and technology don't go together and, well, is it possible for you to watch the kids? Just for a few hours?"

Shouta stared. She wanted him to babysit?

"You want me to babysit?" Shouta asked, just to make sure he was following.

"If you have time. I don't mean to impose."

"I-it's fine. I don't patrol until eight tonight. I, if you trust me, I'd be happy to."

Inko's face softened from worry into fondness. "Of course we trust you. Thank you, Shouta."

She turned to three boys clustered around them. "Be good for Shouta now, alright?" After getting nods and dispersing head pats she gave final farewell and left to wrangle staff, books, and water.

Shouta looked down at the three hellions he was suddenly in charge of and their bright, sharp little eyes.

"What?"

Tenko shrugged and Izuku beamed.

Katsuki scowled. "What are we going to *do,* Old Man?"

Shouta sighed. This was what he got for modifying different training exercises into games. A regular trip to the park just wouldn't do anymore, apparently, at least when he actually in charge. Well, that was fine. Shouta has some plans he might as well start implementing.

"Who wants to go to a different park?"

Tenko and Katsuki were intrigued, their desire for adventure shining through their grumbling that it was still a park as Shouta shuffled them towards the train.

"Why?" Izuku asked, all sunshine to the other boy's scowls.

Shouta scooped the boy up, briefly burying his face in green curls as baby Izuku laughed in a way that Shouta's Izuku had long stopped.

"Because I know a few kids who could use a friend."

Izuku looked down at Shouta with ocean-filled eyes. “Most kids don’t want to be my friend.”

“These ones do. These ones need a perfectly Izuku-shaped friend.”

“Are you sure?” Izuku whispered, fragile hope the lattice that once held an entire society (Shouta’s entire world) together.

“Kid, I’ve never been so sure of anything in my life.”

Shinso was the first target because he was easy. Shouta had already confirmed that Shinso was in his final foster home and pulled a few background strings to help his new parents into being able to keep him. It had taken an hour of sun in the park by said foster home, two Hero games, and Izuku’s excited babbling about how *cool* Brainwashing was as a quirk to secure Shinso’s friendship.

Tenko and Katsuki snorting at the purple haired kid and explaining that their quirks could cause way more damage, they’d make much better villains, don’t be dumb, probably hadn’t hurt. Shouta wasn’t the slightest bit proud and no one could prove that. The ice cream he’s bought them all wasn’t related in the slightest.

Iida was also easy. Shouta just called Tensei and set up a play date the following week, though only after swearing the man to secrecy and allowing a photo of Shouta being buried in children who’d ‘captured’ the villain as future blackmail. Iida also brought with him Yaoyorozu because Yaoyorozu’s mother had been talking to the Iidas at the last Hero Charity Event Thing about her worry about her daughter’s socialization.

Iida and Yaoyorozu combined gave Shouta an entrance to the Todorokis, since they all ran in similar Daylight Hero circles. It took planning and coordination but Shouta had only needed one park playdate to get everything secured. Shouto had fucking imprinted on Izuku, which was hilarious even without Katsuki’s flustered anger. Even better, Tenko and Toya had immediately dissolved into protective big-brother hovering and very loud arguments. Shouta was pretty sure that he’d never seen Tenko have so much fun.

Inko and Mitsuki had also latched on to Rei, befriending her with the aggressive softness that Shouta had expected. Between the two of them and his own contacts he was sure they could get the Todorokis the help they needed.

Tokoyami was added when a bully made the mistake of insulting him

for his mutation quirk only to be immediately set upon by Shouta's small hellion army (Mitsuki's words that neither Inko nor Shouta had actually argued). Shoji joined a week later when Tokoyami shyly asked if they could go to yet another different park where he'd seen someone be mean to a different kid with a mutation quirk. Ashido and Kirishima were inducted through sheer force of friendliness and the excitement of hero games that Shouta designed very carefully.

Shouta was pretty sure Izuku had a map of all the parks in the area and was drafting a visitation schedule. Shouta wondered if he should show Izuku his own schedule of the different games and activities he'd created. His kids need to be able to protect themselves, regardless of whether or not they choose to be heroes this time around (and he thinks, sometimes, that he is a truly selfish man, because he would be okay if they didn't, if they never gave their lights and their blood to the world if that would keep them *safe*). So Shouta designed the games to match their current abilities, to push how they think and believe, to foster teamwork and trust, to have fun.

His kids deserved to *have fun.*

The others would come over time. Not everyone went to the park. Not everyone lived nearby (Aoyma was in *France).* He'd help them, though. He'd save them.

He had time. He had blood in his teeth and ghosts in his bones and *time.*

***

Baby Izuku leaned into Shouta's side as they sat on a park bench, watching a very cut-throat game of tag that had Tenko and Toya working together to terrorize the younger children.

"You let yourself be tagged," Shouta said blandly as he sipped he coffee. The breeze was cool and soft through the trees.

Izuku hummed. "Yup."

"What do you want?"

Izuku laughed before looking up at Shouta through curly hair. "You

know, you're the only one who is always convinced I'm up to something."

"You have a very sneaky mind." Shouta poked Izuku in the forehead, the boy going cross-eyed trying to follow the finger. "It's good thing."

"Still. Even more than Mama. Even more than *Tenko* and he's usually planning with me."

Shouta snorted. The kid wasn't wrong. They went back to watching the game as Yaoyorozu dove to the ground in an excellent dodge. Shouta was patient; he well knew that Izuku would speak in his own time. Nothing ever came from pushing the kid.

"There's a lot of us now," Izuku said around his bit lip.

"There are. Is that a good thing?" Shouta asked.

"It's *amazing,"* the kid breathed. "And it's because of you."

"I'm not the one making friends."

"But you're bring us together. Like, like glue. Or like a school, but better." Izuku tilted his head. "Shinso was talking about calling you Aizawa-sensei. The others really liked it, so don't freak out when they start."

Shouta flinched, which baby Izuku caught because he'd wrapped both arms around Shouta's forearm.

"Kid."

"Aizawa-sensei because you're teaching us to be Heroes."

Shouta flinched again. ""I am *not.* I'm teaching you to defend yourselves. You don't *need* to be Heroes."

"I *know,"* Izuku said with more attitude than Shouta had ever heard from this baby Izuku. "You've given all of us that speech. But I *want* to be a Hero. It's all I've ever wanted, all most of us want, in one way or another. And I appreciate that you're trying to give us choices, I do, choices are something I haven't been given very often, but I'm going to be a Hero. I know you know that. You're the only one who really knows that."

Shouta dropped his head onto Izuku's. "You're going to be the greatest Hero I've ever met." He turned to watch Jirou and Ashido preform a

flawless jail break. “You all are.”

“Good. So don’t be surprised when they call you Aizawa-sensei.”

Shouta opened his mouth to respond, but paused, switching tracks as he noticed something. “They? Not you?”

Izuku tightened his grip on Shouta’s arm. “We’re different, Mama and Tenko and I. Shinso’s your favourite-“

“I don’t have *favourites.”*

“-and Kacchan amuses you when he’s not being a brat and you’re worried about the Todorokis a lot, but we’re different. *I’m* different.” Izuku looked up with green-glass eyes, rivers of observation and fear and bravery. “Is it because I look like your son?”

Shouta sucked a breath into lungs filled with scars.

“Mama told us about him. That he was gone and you were sad but it’s why you were so good with kids and we needed to be gentle and not try to fix your sadness except with hugs.

“But you stare at me sometimes,” Izuku continued, relentless as he always was. “And you keep up with me. Handle me? Even Mama doesn’t always understand where my brain goes. Tenko promised to follow but he doesn’t always get where I’m going, get *why.* Kacchan doesn’t either, or he wouldn’t have been mean to me, before. I think. But you do. And you smile when I’m too much and too talkative and too energetic like it’s a *good thing.* Like it makes you happy.*”*

Izuku leaned away from Shouta’s hand with scowl, not afraid but determined not to be interrupted.

“So I was thinking. If I look like your son and act like your son, then maybe we would have been family? Not brothers, because I have one of those and though you’ve been really good for Mama-“

“I’m not dating your mother.” Those were not the words he wanted to say, but Shouta wasn’t sure exactly what the words he wanted to say were.

Izuku looked at Shouta like he was stupid. It was a very good ‘you’re stupid’ look. Possibly even better than the one Shouta levelled at that first year who set fire to their desk earlier in the week.

“Obviously. You’re in love with Zashi.”

“Wha-you’ve never even met Hizashi!”

Izuku scoffed. Scoffed. “You talk about him a lot. And get a look on your face.” He reached up and put a small hand under Shouta’s eyes. “In your eyes. You get it when you look at me too. It’s soft and sad and full of love.”

Izuku’s hand shook, lightly, where it pressed into Shouta’s skin. Shouta removed it and held the hand between his own, as he’d used to when his Izuku was exhausted and broken and on the edge in the future that would never ever happen.

“A lot of people hate me,” Izuku said quietly but factually. “They think I’m worthless or broken. I know the difference between that and love. I know you love me. And I love you. So. So, I want to call you Uncle. I want you to be my uncle because I’m like your son and that means we could have been cousins and you can be Mama’s brother because having a brother is great and she deserves that. And you’d be family.

“I want you to be family,” Izuku whispered.

Shouta let go and he saw Izuku flinch, saw him start to withdraw. He started crying when he realized Shouta only let go so he could bundle the boy onto his lap and mutter, “Okay. Okay, yes, sure. I love you, too. I *do.*”

Shouta had never been good at denying any version of Izuku, not really, not for anything that didn’t directly impact his health.

They sat like that until Izuku stopped crying, until the warmth from the small, safe, happy version of his son (his *nephew*) soaked into Shouta’s muscles and reached that dark guilty spot inn his heart that still missed his Izuku. That loved this lovely little boy but missed the hurt yet still so kind man that he’d once become.

Inko watched them from across the park, garden-green eyes happy and somehow reminding him as she so often did that grief was okay. That things could be better even if better was different. That he might be trying to save them but they were trying to save him just as much.

Fuck, Shouta thought as Izuku eventually ran to tell his mother of his successful adoption of Shouta into the family, Hizashi was going to adore these people.

“Izuku thinks you’re from the future,” Tenko said from where he was leaning on the back of the bench, staring off into the trees behind Shouta. Shouta had known he was there because Tenko was always there when Izuku was crying.

“Izuku is a very bright boy,” Shouta admitted, the words drawn out of him with bleeding edges. Surely he could be done with the emotional conversations and world-altering moments? Please?

“Did I hurt Izuku in the future?”

Shouta closed his eyes. “Very badly.”

The words sat between them before Tenko snorted. “Not even going to try to soften the blow?”

“You don’t like lies. And sure, that version of you was manipulated and very hurt yourself, but. That’s not going to change how you feel, is it?”

Tenko paused again. The kid often thought about what he was going to say well before hand unless he got into an argument and his temper flared. Shouta wasn’t sure if that was the therapist’s influence, Inko’s, or even Izuku’s, but he didn’t imagine this conversation would be any different.

“No,” Tenko finally admitted. “It doesn’t.”

“Don’t do it this time.”

Tenko finally turned to him with faint lines of incredulousness on his face. “That’s *it?* That’s your advice?”

Shouta closed his eyes. “Neither you or Izuku are ever going to be who you were. I’ve made damn sure of that.”

Tenko for obvious reasons, but even Izuku deserved a chance to be someone completely different. Izuku deserved to live without chains wrapped around his bones, hurting and binding him at every attempt to grow. Shouta may have loved the Izuku who stood with him, back to back against the world, but he would give his beating heart to save this boy from those scars.

Tenko stared at him through long hair that Inko had let slip was left that way to match Shouta’s. “You have to take responsibility. You have to make me a good Hero.”

Shouta almost wanted to snort. He would not be the first to jump on the boy if he hurt Izuku, not with the way Plan Friend was going. Shouta didn't though, because he understood the trust in the question.

"If you'll listen to me, then sure," Shouta replied. This version of Tenko had potential, after all. He had something he wanted to protect more than anythings.

Tenko turned around but let his should press into Shouta's back over the bench."Okay." He let out a deep breath, expelling fears so old they had cobwebs. "Okay, Uncle."

Shouta nodded. Things were okay.

They were.

***

Things were not okay.

Izuku was so tired. He was tired of playing monster, tired of pretending he had energy, that he hadn't been burnt out years and futures ago.

Tired of lying to All Might.

He hadn't expected the Heros to jump on the information he managed to send so quickly, to be so ready and willing to take down a Villain so good at hiding that most didn't even know he was there. He hadn't expected All Might himself to respond to Izuku's coded communications.

Oh, there were others, but frequently it was All Might. Izuku recognized his once-mentor's quiet calm, unwavering support, brutal strength, and ruthless relentlessness. Izuku recognized the worry, the care, the kindness that crept in for the inside-man that All Might had never even met.

They were down another hideout, toppled with the finances Izuku had scavenged and testimonials underground heroes had gathered from a rather impressive trafficking takedown. Izuku almost wondered if Eraserhead was involved, even though he knew his Dadzawa would be at UA and had no reason to know about All Might just yet.

Izuku ached to research. To search and find and examine any piece of

information on his dad, his mom, his friends. But he couldn't dare, not when even the slightest discovery would put a target on their backs.

He couldn't handle a target on their backs. Not when he could help them, save them.

Maybe when it was over. When All for One was gone. Maybe then he could stop telling All Might he was fine. Could even take All Might up on the surprisingly subtly offer of a job as an analyst in his agency or a new identity all together. Could check on his people. Could make help baby Izuku despite the fact that the kid would likely never get One for All.

Could ensure his Dadzawa was okay.

Izuku could do hold out for them. He could do this for them. He could.

Izuku returned to his office chair. He returned to his chair and his keyboard, jittery with the phantom hopes of friends who might never care about him but would now get a chance to be okay.

Centre

Chapter Summary

> Inko gets angry and Shouta is supportive. So are the rest of the heroes at UA. Things get done.

Chapter Notes

> One more to go! I think this might end up being the only story I've ever accurately predicted the chapter count. I think the next one will be the one people have been waiting for, but I hope you enjoy some supportive family in this one!

Nezu walked through the door of the staff room and all heads turned to him. Shouta was the only exception because he was in his sleeping bag with his head on Hizashi's lap and was too damn comfortable for the principal's nonsense.

Except the principal turned to Shouta. "You might want to get up, Aizawa-san. You have guests!"

Shouta grumbled, but started to comply. Nezu didn't give warnings without good reasons. Shouta was officially detangled and sitting grumpily on the couch when the door opened. He shot to his feet the instant after, stepping forward just enough to have the momentum to meet a red-face Izuku and swing him up into his arms.

Tenko was hesitating by Inko's side, but his hands were clenched so tightly that he'd probably have to be guided through exercises for loosening the muscles up later. Shouta crouched down and opened his free arm and wrapped it tightly around the older boy when he slowly walked into the embrace. The kid squawked a little when Shouta used his Hero-trained-strength to pick Tenko up too, Izuku giving a wet little giggle as he allowed room for Tenko to wrap his own arms around Shouta's shoulders.

Inko stepped forward last and Shouta didn't know how to hug her, he didn't have enough arms, but the Midoriyas were huggers and criers and he *hated* seeing them sad. She solved the problem by leaning forward and winding one hand into the end of his capture scarf, tugging him down just far enough to rest her forehead on his.

"I'm sorry," she said in a whisper that surely carried across the entire

room. “I’m sorry. I promised myself I would never do this, never ask you for more after everything you’ve already given, never take advantage of your job as a Hero. But I need your *help.”*

“Yes, okay. Anything,” Shouta said, scanning for injuries and mentally taking stock of his weapons, safe houses, contingencies, and contacts.

Inko let out a breath. “Thank you, brother.”

“What!”

They both turned to look at Hizashi, still sitting on the couch but with his hands over his mouth and sheepish eyes. He also looked kind of funny: soft and sad and just a little hopeful. Nemrui had her leg pressed into his side from where she was sitting on top of the couch, a phone in her lap that suggested there was photographic evidence of Shouta being a children’s jungle gym.

“Oh,” said Shouta. “Right. I’ve been adopted.”

Hizashi and Nemuri blinked at him but Vlad just sighed exasperatedly. And now that Shouta looked, yes, the rest of his colleagues were staring at him with various states of shock. Thirteen looked like they wanted to coo, Snipe had his hat tipped way back, Ectoplasm had dropped his tea, and Powerloader had scorch marks from where he’d fumbled the mechanism he’d been tinkering.

Shouta shrugged as well as he could while buried in children that were a touch too large for this. “She picked me up off a park bench.”

“It doesn’t work like that,” Vlad said.

Tenko scoffed. “Eraserhead picked me out of an alleyway full of trash. Pretty sure it does.”

Inko laughed, too short, too sharp, but genuine. “Apologies,” she said to the room full of heroes with a little bow. “My name is Midoriya Inko and this is Midoriya Izuku and Midoriya Tenko. We claimed Shouta as ours a few months ago.”

“That’s not important,” Shouta started.

“I beg to fucking differ.” Nemuri crossed her arms on the couch, Hizashi nodding wide-eyed beside her.

“What’s *wrong*?” Shouta asked.

“Sorry dear, we’re fine,” Inko said, patting Shouta’s cheek and stepping back.

Shouta felt the weight of Tenko on his hip shift and Izuku dig his nose into Shouta’s neck just a bit further. “I don’t believe you. Are you hurt? Was it the the school? Are the new teachers not good enough? Did the say something?”

Tenko huffed and poked his brother in the back. “Told you that was Uncle Zawa.”

“And Nezu,” Shouta admitted freely because Nezu was *helpful*. Under certain circumstances and to certain people. “He quite likes taking down corrupt institutions.”

“Indeed I do!” Nezu clapped his hands. “Will those services be needed again? I’m always happy to be of assistance.”

“How about a corrupt society?” Asked Inko, and Shouta finally realized her quiet calm was a cover for absolute shaking rage. Rage of the kind that he’d only ever seen from Izuku once or twice. Old rage, tired and worn smooth around the edges from where it had been bound and suppressed and quieted hundreds times or more.

Inko wasn’t going to quiet the rage this time and Shouta felt his own sharp grin starting across his face. Something in Inko’s expression softened at the expression, in the implicit agreement.

“I’m the mother of a villain and a useless callback to the past.” Midoriya said flatly, ignoring how at least half the staff room flinched. “Or at least that’s what the Quirk Counsellor Tenko’s being going to for *weeks* finally told us today as he ushered us out the door with enough suppressants prescribed to knock out an elephant.”

She tilted her head. “We also, in no particular order, got kicked out of two grocery stores and a bookstore, were physically harassed on the train, and got caught in minor incident where a Hero deliberately turned away because an old neighbour described our quirk statuses in an effort to get evacuated first before *spitting on my son on their way out.”*

“I would like the name of that Hero,” Nezu said into the silence. Shouta nodded, a little distant because he already had the name of that Quirk Counsellor’s office and they would be out of business by the end of the week.

Inko shook her head. “That isn’t *enough.*”

The staff shifted around them, Snipe having tipped his hat back down and Nemuri having wrapped her arms around herself. Shouta’s colleagues were good people. They were good Heroes and teachers and so much more. They’d also all had to accept, at some point or another, that they couldn’t save everyone. No matter how much they wanted to.

But they didn’t always have to.

Shouta let his grin grow sharper as Tenko slid to the ground but kept one hand tucked into Shouta’s belt loop.

“So what’s the plan?” He felt many eyes on him, but it was the two sets of brilliant green that had him flashing teeth. “Don’t see it too often, but the brat gets his plotting face from you, and you’re wearing it now.”

“Hey!” Izuku said into Shouta’s neck, before he turned around to peer at his mom. “Really?”

She *smirked.* “Shouta, how would you feel about making you park-playdates permanent?”

Shouta and Izuku both blinked.

“But they’re already permanent?” Shouta said.

“But they already are?” Izuku asked.

Tenko pinched the bridge of his nose with his free hand, a gesture that Shouta knew the kid had only started using recently.

Inko laughed and Hizashi and Nemuri came to stand behind Shouta, which could have felt like pressure but really just felt like support.

“Right,” Inko said in a way that meant she was humouring her silly boys. She turned to Shouta’s friends and colleagues. Nezu was sitting on Nemuri’s shoulders and having some kind of silent communication staring session with Izuku which was probably the most dangerous thing to happen all day.

“So my sons’ friend group, that Shouta gathered together by the way-“

“I did not.”

“Yes, you did, Uncle Zawa,” Tenko huffed.

“He did!” Izuku exclaimed, still refusing to leave Shouta’s arms but also refusing to let Shouta hide from taking credit.

Shouta sighed but Hizashi bumped his hip and smiled at him with enough fucking *pride* that he didn’t protest anything further. Even if Izuku was now looking at him smugly. The brat.

“-has a quirkless child, two to five quirks commonly viewed as villainous, three very clear mutation quirks, and a number of others are quite easily self-harming or difficult to control.” She looked at Shouta with her pay-attention-this-has-emotional-significance-you-normally-miss-or-ignore-look. “I’ve had multiple parents tell me that their kids have learned more in a few hours of modified capture the flag with no quirk usage than in weeks of counselling or years of school.”

Hizashi was clinging to Shouta’s arm now, well acquainted with his tendency to run away from anything resembling emotions and praise. Izuku was back to giggling.

“You focus on support and self-confidence and building each other up. I want that to be *permanent*. I want something like my library support groups that lasts more than an hour or two. I want support organizations that already exist to be accessible, to not be forced somewhere that someone has to walk past scowls and muttered comments. I want-“

Inko seemed to run out of works and it was Vlad, surprisingly, who stepped in, Ectoplasm hovering at his shoulder. “You want a community centre. One that caters to the disenfranchised.”

“*Yes*,” Inko breathed, part prayer and part curse. “That would be wonderful.I know it will be hard, that the funding let alone the location and the city approvals will be next to impossible.” she looked to Shouta, “I know it’s not Hero work, exactly, but I’d hoped that maybe you’d have some connections at least know where to start-“

Izuku was the one to cut his mother off this time. “Shh, Mama. That’s *Uncle Zawa’s* plotting face.

And the kid wasn’t wrong. Shouta was mentally going back over his safe houses, contingencies, and contacts.

“I have a location,” he announced after a moment.

“What?” Vlad asked, Inko looking at Shouta with wide eyes.

Shouta shrugged. “Dissembled villain base. Minor leagues, nothing really dangerous left behind but definite affiliations that mean it’s been on the market for a while despite its rather reasonable price for an office building. The structural reinforcements, small indoor training ground, and quirk-resistant rooms might have something to do with that but would serve us quite well for gyms and training if we could get some competent quirk counsellors involved. Also has an industrial kitchen, which seems like a good idea, basic security and isn’t in the best or worst areas, which, again, helpful to meet people where they are.”

Shouta dumped Izuku onto the table suddenly, ignoring his squawk and the mutters of his colleagues.

“What, do you just have a list of potentially useful real estate in you head?” Vlad asked in a tone that was meant to be sarcastic but didn’t quite make it.

“Yes? I was going to pass the info along to my Underground Coalition or Nezu as a potential acquisition. This is better. Now,” Shouta turned to a squirming Izuku. “Speak, Gremlin.”

“I, I don’t have anything to say?”

“You do. You’ve been shifting all around my back in your attempt to curb the mumbling.”

“But-“

“I want to hear it,” Shouta told him softly, in voice he’d used hundreds of times before.

Izuku took one last look around the Heros who were trying their best not to stare and failing utterly before focusing on Shouta. The kid took a deep breath before meeting the challenge, like he always did.

“Funding is manageable. I mean, we have the Yaoyorozus, Iidas, and Todorokis in the group already and this is exactly the kind of thing they’d get involved in on both and an agency and family level, at least as soon as Shouto’s mom’s divorce goes through.

“And Tokoyami has started taking Shoji to his group for mutant quirks, but they’re afraid the place is going to close soon because the landlord keeps jacking up the rent. But, you said this new location has

office space? If we offer it to them and other either non-profit organizations or tutoring groups and quirk counsellors that are inclusive to all quirk statuses at a reasonable, stable price not affected by prejudice we could make some revenue back to pay for the building.

“Particularly if you open up a couple of the floors, how large was this building anyways? To business opportunities for quirkless people or others in similar situations. Or even have rentable office space? I know that a couple of people in the Library groups Mama and I started would be interested in that.

“And, um, internships? Or mentorships? You mentioned your Underground Coalition and they might want to get involved because these are the people they help and also the people they come from. I know you’re *really* careful about child soldiers and training kids too early,” Izuku reached forward and poked a frown line in Shouta’s face, “but open information about the field and that it’s a real way to be a Hero would mean everything to kids like Tenko, Hitoshi, and I.

“Also, UA could get involved too? Like for scholarships instead of internships? I have the stats back home and while you’re not openly prejudiced mutant and villainous quirks are definitely under-represented in your student body. This could help with that! And you know, be good PR. Not to mention the number of Agencies represented by the staff that also might want to get involved in one way or another…”

Izuku finally trailed off, possibly because everyone was staring or possibly because he ran out of breath. Shouta took the break to pat the kid on the head and turn to a speechless Nemuri and Hizashi. “This is my nephew.”

Nemuri barked out a laugh. “I can see the resemblance.”

Hizashi smiled, all spinning sunlight and tumbling affection, and began showering a blushing Izuku in praise. He only stopped when Nezu interrupted.

“I think UA can certainly get involved. PR is always a good way to sway the Board. As for the city approvals, I wouldn’t worry too much. I’m sure I can get those for us in short oder.”

He exchanged a look with Shouta that meant Shouta would be doing some snooping and some blackmail gathering in the near future. He was not opposed.

“My agency is also in,” Nemuri added. “And not just because I’d do anything for Sho. We focus a lot of non-profit work on self-defence and domestic abuse support. Get me one of those spaces for self-defence classes and I can promise a regular rotation of teachers.”

“I’m sure the agency Vlad and I work for would also be willing to contribute in some way,” Ectoplasm stated. “We have a number of Heroes with quirks not optically suited to Heroics that would love a project like this.”

Vlad nodded.

The conversation devolved from there. Inko and Nemuri started talking about classes and defence. Vlad and Ectoplasm were babbled at by a beaming Izuku who bounced back and forth between their quirks and the kind of quirk support they should have at the Centre. Thirteen, Snipe and Nezu discussed UA involvement and having teachers do practice sessions there as part of their training, Thirteen still being new and a little nervous. Tenko was insisting to Lunch Rush and Powerloader that there be beds for street kids and the older two were proposing classes on cooking and tool maintenance for skills that kids might not get if they didn’t have a stable home.

Shouta lost Hizashi for a moment, but he quickly reappeared with a laptop, chart paper, and markers and began writing everything down that he could. Shouta drifted over to help and had his shoulder nudged softly.

“You know, we’re going to be talking about the adoption thing.”

Shouta nodded because he did know that.

“You also know that the Radio Station is going to be helping if I have to yell them all into submission.”

Shouta smiled because he knew that too.

They could do this. (He could do this.)

***

Shouta sat on a park bench and stared. He stared and shook and

almost cried when Inko and Hizashi came and sat next to him, one on either side.

Inko leaned her head on his shoulder while Hizashi held onto Shouta's hand, both careful of the bandages holding Shouta together.

"It's done," Shouta said, ghosts in his tone and blood on his hands. "It's *done."*

Even he didn't know if he was talking about the Centre in front of him or the utter ruination of the man who'd once taken everything from him.

"Are you ready?" Hizashi asked, hand lightly tracing over the bandage wrapped around Shouta's wrist. Hizashi had watched Shouta pack his bag for his most recent mission with bruised eyes, tracking the faint shake to Shouta's wrists and believing Shouta's whispered-bone promise that this was *the last one,* the final take down in the series of missions that kept taking Shouta away these last few months. He believed because sometimes faith was all a Hero had left.

And it been the final take down. Shouta hadn't been there to see All for One fall, but he'd lined the information up like dominos (like graves in a faltering line). He'd been at one of the sub-bases, taking out the remains of the Doctor's operation and erasing the quirks of the Nomus' precursors. It was satisfying and bloody and the perfect distraction for the major assault on All for One himself.

All Might had sent Shouta a picture of All for One's corpse. It was gruesome and highly against procedure. Shouta had never appreciated the man more, particularly since Yagi had still never asked why Shouta was so devoted. Why Shouta needed this man he wasn't supposed to have met, to have even known about, ended with such a fervent intensity.

Shouta turned to look at Hizashi and for a long moment could only see him at with blood in his hair and wide-staring eyes. Shouta shut his own but used their entwined hands to pull Hizashi down so their foreheads rested against each other and Shouta could feel Hizashi's breath on his cheek.

Inko rested her head on his back and the three of them sat together for one long moment before Inko stood. She held out her hand, strong and steady and sure.

"The boys are inside. We missed you."

Shouta took the hand.

***

It was done.

Izuku shook as he stared at All for One's corpse. At the body of the man who'd once taken everything from him.

"Little Hero?" All Might, the man who'd once given Izuku everything and would never ever know that, asked, extending a hand to Izuku. "Are you ready to go now, my boy?"

Izuku looked up at his first Hero from his position on the floor where he'd collapsed after triggering the systems into a complete shut down in as noisy a way as possible. He'd erased years worth of data and cruelty with the very intentional benefit of distracting All for One at a very key moment. All Might and his allies had done the rest.

Izuku was not ready. He wanted it more than almost anything and he was not ready.

Izuku took the hand.

Welcome Home

Chapter Summary

> Izuku find a building he doesn't remember. There are hugs, plans, and a promise.

Chapter Notes

> The reunion!

Izuku sat on a park bench and stared.

He couldn’t stop, not with the hundreds of whirling-dust thoughts in his head. He wasn’t muttering though, not when the threat of death and discovery had scared that habit right out of him. He kind of wanted to mutter about the building in front of him. The building with it’s welcoming colours, constant stream of kids, and many visitors with visible mutations.

The building with the word *Dekiru* hung by the entrance in brilliant green lettering.

Izuku sat, trembling and staring and wondering.

He wasn’t the most clear headed at the moment, sure, but his memory was something he prided himself on, had saved his life more than once, and that building hadn’t been here. Not the first time he’d lived this year. He really should have done some research before running out into the All for One-free world but, well, he wasn’t even supposed to be out of the hospital (the hospital that was being paid for by All Might, meaning any tech Izuku might have grabbed was *stealing from All Might)*.

He could go to the library and use their computers. He would go to the library and figure out what was going on. Figure out what had changed, what he’d changed either intentionally in the take down of All for One or inadvertently in the damned butterfly effect.

He just needed a minute first.

So Izuku sat on the bench. He sat and let the warmth of the sun sink into his skin, the breeze ruffle his hair, the slats of the bench press into his spine a constant reminder of presence and reality. When he finally opened his eyes, not that he really remembered closing them,

he saw himself.

“Hi!” Baby Izuku said, a beaming smile on his face.

Izuku blinked.

“It’s a lot to take in, I know. Do you want a tour so you know what’s available?”

Izuku blinked again and then looked to the sign that listed the services inside, everything from Quirk Counselling to after school programming to employment service for all quirk statuses (including quirkless; they’d put that on the *sign)*.

Baby Izuku, and the child version of Izuku really wasn’t that young but this was *strange*, laughed. “I know, but there’s a lot that doesn’t fit on the sign.”

The kid’s smile grew impossibly wider when Izuku stood and didn’t falter in the slightest when Izuku reached for his cane. Izuku did falter though. He had a brief moment of panic flare with the belated realization that he could be recognized. That he was about to follow his younger self into a building he knew nothing about (beyond that remarkable, impossible list of services).

The moment didn’t last and Izuku almost snorted as reality crashed into him. Izuku’s hair was a mix of green and grey, the result of a quirk he didn’t remember being hit with, and longer than he’d ever worn it as a child (Dadzawa length, for all that Izuku tended to wear his in a braid). He had claw marks that traced over an eye and across his left cheek as well as scars down his throat and jumping across his hands to his arms. He had a limp. And a cane.

He looked nothing like the beaming child in front of him.

The cane tapped as Izuku followed his baby self into the building he’d been staring at for the entire morning, absently wondering where the level of trust Baby Izuku was showing came from. It certainly wasn’t there in any of Izuku’s memories.

Izuku was rather more consciously grateful for the pressed coolness of his button down shirt and sturdy yet professional slacks tucked somewhat incongruously into combat boots. He didn’t feel that out of place in this building with it’s people of different styles and shapes. Izuku had asked Sir Nighteye for the clothes, trusting the man a little more than All Might in that regard.

All Might had also been busy with the clean up and Sir Nighteye had seemingly taken special interest in Izuku. The man had reiterated All Might's offer of working for them, something that Izuku took a little more seriously coming from the man who'd created one of the only Underground Agencies to run successfully, even past his death.

Sir Nighteye had also given Izuku the cane, which was *kind.* Izuku knew weapons and materials and knew that this cane was not something a civilian was supposed to have. It also allowed him to breathe and not feel nearly as naked without the copious about of knives and gadgets he'd managed to secret about his person and the hospital had confiscated.

He tuned back into Baby Izuku's rambling as they passed through the doorway, blinking at the warm atmosphere and copious plants.

"Mama thinks plants make the space more welcoming!"

Izuku started nodding, because they did, then turned to back to his baby self. "Your mother?"

"Yup! She's the Director! She and UA staff and a bunch of other people got the Centre built." The kid went on another long and bouncing rant about the Centre and the services and the many Heroes who had a part in it all. Izuku would have had trouble following, imagined many people would have to be honest, but Baby Izuku was still Izuku, and Izuku knew how his mind worked.

They made it to a wide and open room with different sized tables spaced around the floor and beautiful windows making up almost an entire wall.

"Come on, the have my favourite, Katsudon! You should get that, too."

"What happened to the tour?" Izuku asked.

"Were starting at the cafeteria. You're too thin." Baby Izuku looked at the thin and scarred wrist he'd somehow commandeered to drag him to the counter.

Izuku blushed. "That's a little brazen, kid."

"I've heard that before."

Izuku snorted. "Look, I can't pay-"

“Don’t worry about it. We have a very robust meal program! Both for the after school crowd and the emergency beds.”

Somehow, the detailed conversation of the meal program lasted through the line and halfway through lunch. Izuku wasn’t sure if Baby Izuku was supposed to know this much about how the program was funded, but wasn’t surprised he did. He was pretty sure that the kid probably shouldn’t be telling all this to a random stranger.

It was fascinating though, and probably why it took till halfway through lunch for Izuku’s tired and broken but war-trained ass to realize he was being boxed in.

To be fair, the kids were subtle. But they were *Izuku’s kids.* His future classmates. Izuku knew not underestimate his future classmates.

Even if he had no idea what the fuck they were doing here.

Uraraka and Iida were talking by the windows. Tokoyami, Shoji, and Jirou were playing cards by the East doorway. What looked like the entire child Todorki clan, plus a tiny Toga, were in line for food. Hitoshi and fucking Kacchan were now having lunch a couple tables away.

Izuku turned slowly from taking in the room to turn to Baby Izuku, who grinned at him, sharp and unrepentant and completely unlike any expression Izuku had ever made at that age.

“Midoriya,” Izuku started.

“Hm,” Baby Izuku said, “I never told you my name.” He titled his head, eyes soft in a burning kind of way, and didn’t let Izuku speak. “Welcome home, cousin.”

Izuku blinked once, then twice, then did what over a decade of war and battle and uncertainty told him to do.

He bolted.

He didn’t bolt gracefully, what with the limp and the cane and the unfamiliar ground, but he’d done more with worse. Baby Izuku watched him go, casually checking the phone he’d put out on the table.

The other kids also didn’t move, other than to watch him go.

Izuku should have researched. Why didn't he research? He always researched. This is what he got for not researching once in his life, for thinking he was safe. For not thinking at all. For following a version of himself into a situation Izuku didn't recognized because he was desperate for familiarity, for hope.

He made it to the fire door, hand outstretched, and watched as a long, thin piece of heavy fabric wrapped around his wrist.

Izuku was jerked back suddenly and though he knew how to stop it, how to fight back, how to move and evade, he didn't. He was tired and sore and confused. He was done. (The fabric was more familiar than even his own gear ever had been.)

He fell back and let himself be caught and turned so that when he fell, he landed on a body rather than the hard floor.

"Zuku," Aizawa Shouta breathed, one hand reaching out to trace the scars across Izuku's cheek. The man had been just as gentle when he'd treated the injury back in a future that would never happen.

"Ai- Era-Dad?" Izuku stuttered, partly because there were people around and he didn't know what they *knew,* partly because he was crying now. (*Cousin* whispered his mind, whispered the part that sounded exactly like a baby-faced version of himself. *Mine* whispered a quieter part, one that had been broken and alone and afraid to hope, to dream, to research).

"Deku," his Dadzawa said. Said because that was a name only Izuku would know, here in this time. Said because he was alive and well and brushing his thumbs over Izuku's wet cheeks and carding his hands through Izuku's hair, completely pulling out the braid.

He sat up and Izuku made a broken sound through the tears, only to be pulled from sitting on Shouta's stomach to cradled in his lap, strong arms wrapped just as tightly around his shoulders as the capture weapon around his wrist.

"I-I don't understand?" Izuku managed, tracing under Shouta's eye where there was no crescent scar. "I mean, my body came back but apparently only your mind did so there must have been something about the quirk? Or the distance, since I was os much closer. Maybe, maybe I stockpiled the power while you-"

Zawa slid one gentle hand over Izuku's mouth and leaned his forehead against Izuku's.

“Izu, baby, I don’t actually give a flying fuck.”

Izuku laughed, a weak, wet sound that made Zawa’s shoulders relax for all of a moment before the man inhaled sharply again.

“Shit. *Shit.* You were All Might’s inside man. I left you *alone.”*

Izuku reached up to grab hold of Zawa’s shaking hand, holding the calloused fingers oh so tightly in his own. “And the reconnaissance and sabotage was you. I even thought it was too high quality but I was so afraid to look, to put a target on your back or find you fine without me that I-“ He raised their tangled hands to his forehead. “Shit. We’re so stupid.”

Zawa released one of his hands to start carding through Izuku’s hair, tugging at the black strands occasionally. “We saw each other die,” he said softly.

Izuku looked up into eyes the dark of night and rest and sleep.

“I wasn’t going to recover from those injuries and,” he took a shuddering breath, “there was a very large explosion when you- It was logical to assume that the other hadn’t made it.”

“I had a lot of burns when I arrived,” Izuku admitted.

“I had a breakdown on Nezu’s couch.”

“It’s a very nice couch.”

“So it is.” Zawa let out a wet laugh before collapsing forward and enveloping Izuku in what might honestly be the best hug he’d ever had. Izuku gripped back so hard his hands were cramping. “Welcome home, Zuku.”

Izuku burst into tears. “I’m *home.* And *you’re* home. And were *safe. They’re* safe. Zawa, Zawa, we did it. We did it.”

“We did.” Zawa pressed their foreheads back together. “We *did.”*

They stayed like that for an impossibly long and precious moment that really only ended because Izuku’s mind was not a thing that could stop or stay still for any amount of time.

“Cousin?” Izuku asked, slightly proud that he sounded only slightly shaky.

“Hm.” Zawa looked slightly sheepish, but in a completely unrepentant way. “So I also may have had a bit of break down on a park bench. Midoriya Inko found me. And then her boys decided I was their Uncle. Modoriyas are terrifying.”

Izuku laughed at that, softly, and then appeared surprised by the sound. Baby Izuku also laughed before slapping his hand to his mouth. Izuku looked at his younger self from Zawa’s lap, at the way that only Baby Izuku and his mother had come close to the pair just starting to pull themselves off the floor.

Midoriya Inko stepped forward to help, drawing Izuku into a hug the moment he was somewhat on his feet but allowing his right hand to remain attached to Zawa.

“Hello, Izuku. It’s so good to meet you,” Izuku’s mother told him, which hurt, but really mostly in a good way (she was alive and happy and apparently the leader of an entire community centre focused on those no one else wanted to help). “I’m so very glad you came home, nephew mine.”

Izuku blinked and spent several long moments soaking up her warmth and trying not to burst into tears again when she eventually let go.

Baby Izuku took that moment to wrap his arms around Izuku’s waist in what was a very weird moment that probably confirmed some sort of alternate-universe or branching timeline theory since the world didn’t break.

“Thank you,” Baby Izuku said.

“For what?” Adult Izuku asked.

“For being a the hero I needed. The hero we all needed.”

Izuku looked up from his baby-self, his cousin, apparently, to look at the cafeteria full of people and former classmates that were very carefully not looking at them. He then looked to Zawa, hoping the man had some idea how to deal with this because Izuku did not.

Zawa didn’t look back because he currently had his face framed by Izuku’s mother (now Aunt?) who was leaning forward to whisper, “Thank you, Shouta. Thank you for keeping him safe.”

Izuku held tighter to the hand in his and felt Zawa do the same. He was very happy and rather confused and very done, something he was

very sure his Dadzawa was also feeling since the man looked like wanted to drag them both away and into a corner and a sleeping bag. Thankfully, and with the timing that truly made him Izuku's favourite hero, All Might walked through the door.

The careful chatter in the cafeteria swapped very quickly to the quiet rustle of bodies pivoting to watch All Might walk over to their corner. Izuku and probably Shouta were likely the only ones to realize the man was feeling just slightly awkward, more for the moment he hadn't intended to ruin than anything else.

In Izuku's defence, he hadn't expected All Might himself to track him down after the hospital jailbreak.

"Hello Aizawas!" All Might boomed, a slight hesitation the only indication that he was initially intending to use a different greeting. Izuku wasn't surprised he'd resorted to that. The man had definitely heard some of the previous conversation and had also blatantly refused to call Izuku but the name he'd assumed during All for One's takedown since the hospital. Something about knowing that wasn't who Izuku was and giving him time to reveal his own identity. Izuku had been a little emotionally overwhelmed at the time and didn't remember all the specifics.

"It is good to see such a joyous reunion and, perhaps, to finally have an answer to the particular fervency the both of you put towards your recent actions."

Which, yes, that was probably a thought process they should let Yagi keep. Besides, taking down an entire organization because they killed his son was absolutely something Dadzawa would do (had done).

Zawa scowled up at All Might. "Didn't I get you to start calling me Shouta?"

All Might stuttered a bit, which was hilarious but when Izuku tried to hide his smile in his dad's arm the man refocused.

"You left the hospital rather early, my boy."

Izuku just shrugged as Zawa sighed. "Yeah, that tracks. Don't suppose you'd be willing to cause a distraction so we can duck out the back?"

"Certainly," All Might smiled, but it was all Yagi softness. "As long as you promise to contact me later."

“Eep,” said Baby Izuku, looking up at his oldest hero. “I mean, I’ll help.”

Zawa grumbled something about sincerity and stupid friends that even Izuku could barely catch before patting Baby Izuku on the head and shoving a card at All Might.

“Get your teachers licence and then we can talk.”

“Zawa!” Izuku laughed even as a large hand settled around his wrist and hoisted him onto Zawa’s back. Izuku wasn’t really protesting and he wrapped both arms and legs tightly around his dad.

His mother-aunt opened the door with a fond look on her face.

Izuku turned back just once to smile at All Might and point to Baby Izuku. “That’s my cousin. You’re going to like him.”

“I’m sure I will,” Yagi said.

“Wow.” Whispered Baby Izuku. “I mean. Would you like a tour? Of the Centre?”

“Yes, my boy. I do believe I would.”

Zawa budled them both out the fire door with an ease that spoke more to his determination than Izuku’s lack of bulk, though, to be fair, he had been short on more than one meal lately.

The talked as the went, down the stairs and out to a car and away from the Centre. Nothing of the future, not really anything about the past. Mostly catching up so they were on the same page about what they’d done since time travelling with a side of random declarations of how proud they were of each other and how happy they were to not be alone.

Zawa even contributed despite the fact that Izuku was normally the much more emotional one out of the two of them. A fact he lived up to when they had to spend a solid thirty minutes in the parking lot of UA with Izuku sitting in Zawa’s lap and absolutely bawling about the way his dad had found each and every one of their class and made sure they were okay.

Izuku really wasn’t surprised they’d headed to UA. Zawa hadn’t gotten attached to apartments or safe houses easily, and they certainly wouldn’t feel like home after everything they’d been through. UA, on

the other hand, had always felt like home.

He was maybe a bit more surprised when they went directly to Nezu's office while using combat stealth techniques to make sure they weren't seen by any staff or students by mutual silent agreement. Nezu wasn't actually there, but the door opened for Zawa and the man immediately steered Izuku to the purple couch in the corner.

Izuku sat with little effort, his leg sore despite being carried for much of the journey, and smiled at the folded sleeping bag tucked into the corner. There was also a cup full of Zawa's favourite marking pens and a reusable mug with a cat face on it.

Zawa leaned down and rested both of his hands on Izuku's shoulders.

"You know that I'm so very proud of you, right?"

"Yes," Izuku said because he really did know that.

"And that I'm very happy that you're here."

"Yes, Zawa. You've said."

"And that we'll figure all the details and the stories out. Or that we'll let Nezu figure all the details and the stories out."

"Yes, Zawa. What's wrong?" Izuku frowned since his dad generally didn't like repeating himself.

"I really want a fucking nap."

Izuku smiled, a small slow thing and reached out to grab Zawa and pull him onto the couch. The man went very easily and let himself be manhandled into perfect pillow position, only stopping to grab the blanket spread over the back of the couch and the sleeping bag to open and pool around them.

Izuku was tired, too. Emotionally and physically exhausted might be the better terms. A nap, sleeping warm and safe within UA's walls and his dad's arms was the kind of miracle he'd never imagined to have again.

"There's nothing I'd like more," Izuku said, already halfway asleep. "Just, just be here when I wake up."

"Course, kid." Zawa's arms pulled him closer. "Promise."

***

Izuku woke up to rustling, the kind of rusting made when someone was trying to be very quiet. The kind of quiet that wasn't nefarious, though. A careful quiet. A kind quiet.

Present Mic was placing boxes of takeout on Ness's desk, prepping forward in a clear effort not wake them. It succeeded with Shouta, the man still knocked out but *breathing* under Izuku's head, because Shouta trusted Hizashi with everything. Shouta had also admitted to crashing with Hizashi more frequently than not because it was easiest to remember when he was when he didn't wake up alone in an apartment he barely recognized.

It didn't work as well with Izuku, not because he didn't trust Hizashi, but because he'd spent the last year and change waking up in a lair belonging to All for One. Also, the last Izuku had seen Hizashi, the man had been very dead.

"Zashi?" Asked Izuku from his place lying on tope of Zawa, buried in a yellow sleeping bag and diamond-pattered blanket that was possibly the softest thing he'd ever felt.

"Heya, kiddo. Sorry to wake you." Hizashi walked forward a bit, not getting too close. "Just dropping off some food for when you're ready."

"S'okay. Thanks." Izuku closed his eyes for a moment that was possibly longer than he meant it to be. "Glad you're no longer dead. We miss'd you."

Izuku buried more deeply down into the blanket, relishing in the feeling of Zawa's strong arms across his back before freezing.

"Shit," Izuku said. "Wasn't supposed to say that, was I?"

"It's okay, sweetheart. Nezu caught me up on the time travel thing so Shou wouldn't have to."

"That was nice of him," Izuku said, relief sending him into a boneless sprawl as he gave a long, slow blink. He was still so tired. And warm. And safe. When he opened his eyes again, Hizashi was kneeling by the

couch, keeping his movements slow and voice low so not to startle Izuku or wake Zawa. “Don’t let me ruin it.”

Hizashi had raised a hand and hesitated just slightly before Izuku moved to press into the long fingers. “Ruin what?” Hizashi asked, carding through Izuku’s curls with infinite gentleness.

“It. You and Zawa.” Izuku blinked again, fighting sleep. This was important. “Must be weird, having to deal with a sudden surprise kid.” Hizashi’s fingers stilled and Izuku had to fight not to whine and press forward again. “Specially one who’s too old and broken.”

The fingers started again, this time sweeping far enough forward to brush Izuku’s cheek and trace the bottom of the scars there.

“Nah, Kiddo. Pretty sure the surprise kid only makes it better.”

Izuku blinked again, but he forgot to reopen his eyes. By the time he remembered to try, Hizashi was humming softly. The song was pretty and soothing and Izuku didn’t want to interrupt, so he kept his eyes closed.

Better. Things were better.

***

Shouta woke up to cackling. It was soft cackling, but cackling nonetheless. He didn’t actually get up or run for the hills because he’d become well-accustomed to waking up to Nezu’s cackling since he’d come back and taken over Nezu’s couch as a prime napping location. Also because his Problem Child’s hands were in his hair.

Shouta knew those were his Problem Child’s hands. They’d spent hours like this before, alone and scared and craving the only comfort they could find. Shouta was immediately and immensely grateful that there was no moment of confusion or forgetting. That he woke to the bone deep, time-tested certainly that this was his kid, *his Izuku,* running grown up fingers through Shouta’s hair and talking with Nezu over a game of chess.

They were talking about the methods of building Izuku a fake identity and whether he should get his degree through general testing or being

run through UA exams and backdating results. About names and what Izuku wanted to be called. About the benefits of heroics versus quirk counselling versus analysis and the fact that the recommendations of UA, the Centre, and All Might would open whichever doors Izuku wanted. About different hypothetical quirks (never time travel) that could be used to explain why Shouta had an adult son.

They talked until Izuku tugged on a strong of Shouta's hair.

"No comments, Dadzawa?"

Shouta hummed, but opened one eye. "Both of you will do whatever you want."

Nezu cackled again while Izuku just smiled. Shouta did lever himself up though, still in the sleeping bag, so he could lean on Izuku's shoulder and peer at the chess board.

"I suppose I'm a little surprised that neither of you have hit on the idea of making you Nezu's personal student slash assistant and then gas-lighting the fuck out of everyone by explaining nothing at all. Not like Nezu explains things he doesn't want to anyway. And seeing everyone's expressions when they realize Zuku keeps up to the notorious Principal of UA would be fucking hilarious."

Nezu grinned, though Shouta wasn't sure it was just at the idea. "You were right, you know."

Shouta raised an eyebrow.

"I do like him."

Izuku blushed and stuttered and was rescued by the boiling water that announced it was time for tea.

Shouta watched Izuku by the tea. He was hesitating over the choices, probably over-analyzing the options. Tea for headaches, tea for tiredness, the future-Nezu's favourite that might not be the current-Nezu's favourite. His mother's favourite, which would be a comfort or maybe a reminder.

Shouta was considering getting up and going over when Izuku took a deep breath and his shoulders relaxed, fingers training over the different tins with reverence instead of anxiety.

"I can do this," Izuku said quietly.

Shouta smiled and closed his eyes. He didn't need to watch Izuku's choice, not really. He'd support the boy regardless and enjoy the experience all the same.

That's what family did, if various Midoriyas were to be believed.

Shouta couldn't imagine believing in anyone more.

***

Izuku watched his older self, mildly concerned the man was going to laugh himself off the training structure that was really just a plus ultra jungle gym. The concern was secondary to the joy and relief that came from hearing his cousin laugh so freely. Izuku hadn't heard more than a chuckle or a sarcastic quip from the man since he'd come back.

Izuku wasn't sure what kind of future his uncle and cousin had come back from, not really. He had ideas and thoughts and possibilities, but nothing concrete. Cousin Zu had sat down next to Izuku, one night when Izuku had his computer open and his fingers were tapping a restless rhythm into an empty notebook. Izuku's cousin had said that the villain's name was All for One. That Cousin Zu and Uncle Shouta and Uncle Yagi and many other heroes had ended him completely and utterly and that none of it would ever happen.

He said they wouldn't answer questions. Couldn't, because things were better now and they didn't want Izuku or anyone else chasing events that were nothing more than possibilities. That it would hurt in ways they couldn't explain and never wanted any of them to understand.

Cousin Zu had left Izuku at the computer, had deliberately left him enough information to really begin researching and finding his own answers. Izuku hadn't, though. He might, probably would, to be honest, some day. But he'd been more than happy to shut the computer and retreat to the kitchen table where Cousin Zu was challenging Tenko to a game of chess and Uncle Shouta was asleep in sleeping bag in the most defensible spot in the room while Mom and Uncle Zashi were laughing in the kitchen.

The look Cousin Zu had sent Izuku, molten approval backed by an iron core of pride, made the choice worth it.

Izuku liked Cousin Zu. Cousin Zu was Izuku's older self in many obvious

ways but also entirely different in his sadness and caution and lingering fear. Izuku was quirkless. He knew all of those things on an intrinsic level but they didn't linger in his bones and weigh down his movement like they did for Cousin Zu.

Izuku trusted his Cousin Zu and Uncle Shouta. He trusted his mom and his brother and his friends. He knew they would never let him become Cousin Zu. Even if Izuku didn't think he'd mind that much. He hated the hurt that lingered around his cousin. He did, his cousin and his uncle deserved so many nice things, but, well, his cousin was a hero.

His cousin was the first quirkless hero.

Cousin Zu didn't seem to think that was the case. And Izuku knew there was something about a quirk. Something about All for One and Uncle Yagi and the way Cousin's Zu's bones ached and Uncle Shouta's eyes tracked Cousin Zu when certain topics came up. Izuku didn't have all the pieces but he didn't care. Not when Cousin Zu was quirkless now.

Cousin Zu had been quirkless when he'd taken down All for One and earned All Might's respect and come back to Uncle Shouta, making the man happier in one single moment than Izuku's family had ever managed.

Cousin Zu was a hero and if he was so determined not to see it, if he was so determined not to let anyone else see it, content in the shadow of UA and the Centre and providing analysis to agencies on the sly, then okay. That was fine. Izuku respected his cousin's choice.

Midoriya Izuku was the first quirkless hero. He'd also be the second.

"You're cousin is fucking badass," Kacchan panted from beside Izuku. Izuku blinked, pulled back from his thoughts to stare at the blonde and the rest of their friends that had somehow been manipulated into taking each other out as Cousin Zu barely moved from his spot at the top of the jungle gym, one of the four flag's the kids needed to win the training exercise absently spinning in his hand.

"He is," Izuku admitted with no little pride. Though much less pride than Uncle Shouta who was grinning full-teeth and elbowing a bemused Hizashi in the side. "But so are we."

Tenko approached, dragging a smoking Toya by the wrist. "We need a plan, baby brother. A better one."

Izuku hummed, extending his own hand for Kacchan to grab. The other boy's palm was solid in his own as Izuku hauled him up.

Cousin Zu smirked down at him, all-teeth just like his dad. Just like the man who'd he'd sent into Izuku's life, the man that had changed everything with deliberate, fragile desperation. The same desperation was in Cousin Zu's eyes, in his bones, always. A mourning that never left either of them even after they'd reunited because the more you had, the more you had to lose.

There was also a ferocity. An edge to his posture, to his spine, that declared to anyone who really looked that what had been broken had been rebuilt. Cousin Zu's eyes focused on Izuku with a verdant intensity, a spark that hadn't been extinguished regardless of attempted smothering and drowning and sorrow. They challenged.

Izuku grinned back, just once, just briefly with teeth bared, and turned to face his friends. Izuku wasn't about to lose.

"We can do this."

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